

ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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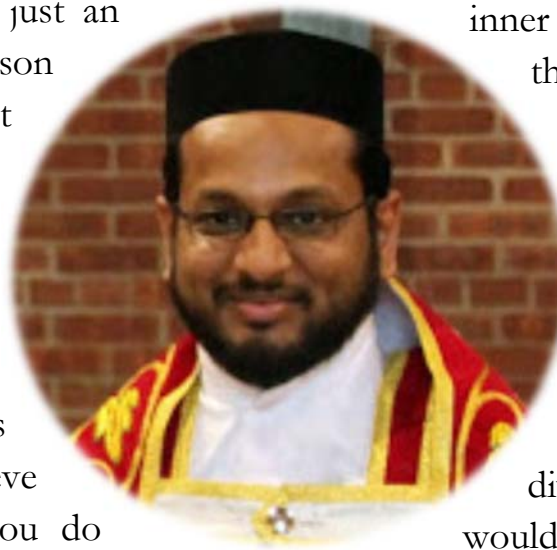
Assistant Vicar's Message

Growing Our Faith

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5). We should pray this prayer regularly: "Increase our faith." First this prayer shows that faith is something that can grow. In contemporary society faith is sometimes seen as just an intellectual belief. If a person believes a set of doctrines, it is thought that they have faith. However, in the Holy Bible, faith is something much more dynamic than mere assent to a set of propositions. As St James states, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (James 2:19). Faith is a trust in God and God's power over our lives. Faith also leads to a life of obedience. So as our

faith grows so also does our reliance and trust on God, as well as our obedience to God's commandments.

Yet the first type faith, mere belief, is not opposed to the second type of faith, deep trust. It is the first that gives birth to the second. Without belief in the central tenets of Christianity we cannot grow in our faith. That is what St James is pointing to as well. It is not enough to simply believe that there is a God. That belief must lead to a deeper inner change. If we don't believe these tenets or if we accept some wrong teaching on these tenets, then our whole orientation to life would change. For example, some claim to be Christian but do not accept that Jesus Christ is fully divine. This wrong belief would change our trust in Jesus and in the understanding of Jesus' power in our lives.



The second type of faith must grow. The disciples were aware of their need for their faith to grow. The father of the son with mute spirit told Jesus, “I believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). Jesus reminds the apostles that even a little faith can be powerful. “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you” (Luke 17:6). Jesus is inviting us to envision faith as somewhat quantifiable or measurable. We do not have any human means to measure this faith. Yet we have all experienced the growth in our faith.

St Paul says, “but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere” (2 Cor. 10:15). St Paul believes that if the faith of

the Corinthian church increases, then St Paul’s faith will also increase. When our faith increases, the lives of those around us are also changed. This is a great reminder to parents. When faith of parents grows, the children will be positively influenced as well.

How can our faith grow? Growth happens when energy is given to something. When our faith is fed with a regular practices of prayer, Bible reading, meditation, and other godly practices, then our faith will grow. We can think of our faith as a garden. A garden needs regular nurturing and pruning for it to be fruitful and beautiful. As we approach Great Lent, let us all strive for our faith to grow.

Lovingly, Fr. Sujit Thomas, Asst. Vicar

COVID-19 and Support System

Financial Assistance to Members

If any of our members need any assistance with food, medicine, transportation, shopping, or any other needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they may contact our Achens or the Secretary. They will coordinate help. Our MC members, along with other volunteers will be available to provide any possible help.

We are all in this together.

Contact:

- Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose: 201.681.1078
- Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas: 516.754.0743
- Steven Kurian: 267.450.6815



Parish Highlights from January

Holy Qurbana Study Series

Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas led 3 sessions (January 14th, 21st, February 4th) on the subject of the Holy Qurbana as requested in our Parish Survey Results. The lessons were in person as well as live streamed on our Parish YouTube Page.

FOCUS

The first Parish FOCUS meeting of 2023 was held at the residence of Steven and Sherry Kurian on January 20th. The lesson was given by Rev. Fr. Tojo Baby on the subject of his studies at the Pontifical Institute in Rome, Italy. More than 30 members were in attendance.

MGOCSM

The Annual MGOCSM New Year's Conference was held at our parish on January 21st. The chief speaker was Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas.

February Events and General Announcements

February 5th – FYC Committee Parish visit to our Church.

Mr. Joby John, former FYC Convener, as well as our own members, Oommen Kappil, Susan John Varghese, and Bishel Baby will preside over a short Presentation and souvenir advertisement donations.

February 11th – MGOCSM Area Meeting

Saturday February 11th @ 10AM at St. John's Orthodox Church, Delaware Valley (4400 State Rd, Drexel Hill, PA 19026).

The speaker will be Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas

The theme is "Tower of Knowledge and Meadow Abounding in Blossom: St Cyril of Alexandria and St Severus of Antioch".

If you need assistance with transportation, please reach out to your parish representative or the area council member.

February 12th – MMVS Bake Sale

MMVS is conducting a snack sale next Sunday, February 12th. They will be selling Achappam for \$10 each, and Banana Chips for \$10. Please plan to participate in this sale.

February 12th – Super Bowl Party

Our hometown Philadelphia Eagles will be playing in the Big Game. The MGOCSM will be hosting a Super Bowl Party at our Parish for those who are interested in watching. Food will be provided.

February 18th – CAYA Meeting

CAYA will be having our monthly meeting on 2/18 via zoom. Children in Grades 5-8 are requested to join. Details will be sent out.

February 24th – FOCUS

The next FOCUS Meeting will be on Friday, February 24th at 8pm after Lenten Evening Prayer at Church.

Men's Forum

Men's Forum has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.

MMVS

MMVS has weekly meetings after the Holy Qurbana every Sunday.

House Visits

The Annual house visits by our Sujit Achen and Tojo Achen are continuing. Weekdays during daytime are more convenient than weekends. If that is convenient for you, please let the Achens know.

Family and Youth Conference

Dates: July 12-15.

Location: Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center

Housing available at local hotel in Clarkstown, PA. Souvenir chief editor is our member Mrs. Susan John Varghese. Our Area has been asked to lead choir. **Those who are joining the choir are asked to register for the conference ASAP as slots are filling up fast.**

Fasts & Feasts

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
2/19	Great Lent begins
3/15	Mid-Lent
3/31	40 th Friday
4/9	Easter

Holy Confession: We have a practice of going through the Sacrament of Confession at least once a year. There will be ample opportunity to confess with Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas and Rev. Fr. Tojo Baby during the Lenten season. Please plan to go to confession before 40th Friday.

Parish Calendar

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
2/12	MMVS Bake Sale
2/12	Super Bowl Watch Party Hosted by MGOCSM
2/18	CAYA Monthly Meeting
2/24	FOCUS Meeting

Diocesan Calendar

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
January 7	Talmeedo One-Day Conference
March 11	Clergy Retreat
April 22	MGOCSM Delegates meeting
May 4-5	Diocesan Leaders Retreat
May 18-20	MMVS Annual Retreat at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center
May 20	MMVS Delegates meeting
June 17	Diocesan Assembly
TBD	GROW One Day Conference
July 12-15	Family & Youth Conference
July 26-29	Talmeedo Men's Retreat
August 16-19	MGOCSM College Camp at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center
September 27-28	Clergy Conference
October 14	MMVS Annual One-Day Conference
November 25	MGOCSM One-Day Conference

Member Announcements

Life Events Announcements

Do you have a special day that you would like to announce, like a milestone wedding anniversary (25th, 50th etc.) or a birthday (50th, 60th, 70th, 80th etc.)? If you would like to, please inform the Secretary in advance. Please remember that even though our parish database includes birthday and wedding day, it doesn't include the year of birth or marriage. Unless you notify the Secretary or Clergy, they wouldn't know milestone events.

Memorials

- ❖ Rev. Fr. Babu Varghese (Shebaly Achen), Vicar of St Thomas Orthodox Church, Mascher St. passed away Jan 13, 2022. Wake and first part of Funeral Service was held in our Church and presided over by His Grace Thomas Mar Ivanios of the Southwest Diocese. The body was transported to India and the final part of the Funeral Service was presided over by our Diocesan Metropolitan His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos on January 24th at St. George Catholicate Simhasana Church, Pathinamthitta, Kerala.
- ❖ Mrs. Thankamma Joy, mother of Mrs. Valsamma M Cherian (#356) passed away January 13th in Kerala. Funeral took place at St George Orthodox Church, Palayam.
- ❖ Mr. Varghese Philipose (75), father of Synu Varghese (#232), passed away January 13th. Mr. Varghese is a member of Ascension Marthoma Church and is survived by his wife and several children. Funeral was held January 16th.
- ❖ Mr. P. M. Yohannan (98), Father of Mr. Panickal Y. Mathaikutty (#173) passed away on January 14th. Funeral was held in Kerala.
- ❖ Mr. K. C. Mathew (93), Uncle of Abraham J. Varughese (#297) passed away on January 15th. Funeral was held on January 17th at St. John's Orthodox Church, Ranny.
- ❖ Mr. M. K. Samuel (86), Uncle of Mr. Bibin Baby (#283) passed away on January 18th after a brief stay in the hospital. Mr. M. K. Samuel is a member of Bethel Marthoma Church, Philadelphia.

- ❖ Mr. M.C. Thomas (74), Brother in Law of Chandini George (#253) passed away on January 19th. Funeral was held at St. Thomas Orthodox Valyapally, Kalyan
- ❖ Mrs. Sosamma George Panicker (80) passed away on Friday, January 20th in Kerala. She is the mother of Aji Panicker (#201), Anto Panicker (#268) and Anil Panicker (#319). Funeral was held in Kerala.

On behalf of the parish, we express our deepest condolences to the bereaving families. Let us pray for the departed souls and for the bereaving families. May our heavenly Father grant peace and comfort that surpasses human wisdom and understanding.

Memorial Prayer List

As you know, members can submit names of departed loves ones that needs to be included on the Memorial Prayer List. You probably have given the names of your departed ones in the past. However, please note that our church doesn't have a system to save such names with dates or automatically track and decide on which Sunday the name should be included on the prayer list. You need to enter the name on the Memorial Prayer list kept in the church office. Note: We do have a master list of departed faithful that we keep for remembering them on the Sunday of the departed faithful, which is a week before the Holy Lent begins. This list has names only no dates.

Birth Announcements

- **Reuel Philip Tobin** was born on Thursday, January 12th to Rev. Fr. Tobin P. Mathew and Lesley T. Reji.
- **Noah Paul Vergis** was born on Wednesday, January 25th to Jibu and Anu Vergis (#325).
- **Mebin John** was born on Friday, January 27th to Saju and Harshal John (#190).

Congratulations to the proud parents and grandparents!

FEBRUARY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Paul C John	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Anil George Panicker	Feb 12
Mr. & Mrs. Koshy Daniel	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Jiju Alex	Feb 12
Mr. & Mrs. Thankachan P Daniel	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew A.P George	Feb 15
Mr. & Mrs. Philip Mathai	Feb 2	Mr. & Mrs. Aji P Abraham	Feb 15
Mr. & Mrs. Nelson O Panicker	Feb 3	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Vaidyan Mathew	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Rajan C Padiyara	Feb 3	Mr. & Mrs. Ponnachen Geevarghese	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Tobin Thankachan	Feb 3	Mr. & Mrs. Simon Cheeran Ittikuru	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob M Zachariah	Feb 4	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew N K.	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Anto G Panicker	Feb 5	Mr. & Mrs. Maliyil M Philip	Feb 19
Mr. & Mrs. George Varghese	Feb 5	Mr. & Mrs. Bivin Varghese Pulivelil	Feb 22
Mr. & Mrs. N K Thomas	Feb 6	Mr. & Mrs. Abraham Varghese	Feb 22
Mr. & Mrs. Cherian V V.	Feb 7	Mr. & Mrs. Issac Mathew	Feb 27
Mr. & Mrs. Ron Philip	Feb 8		
Mr. & Mrs. Joel Philip	Feb 10		
Mr. & Mrs. Robin Philip	Feb 11		
Mr. & Mrs. Oommen Geevarghese Panicker	Feb 12		



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Sajan Benny	Feb 1	Evana V John	Feb 10	Maya Kappil	Feb 18
Jessly Alex	Feb 1	Jitha Ann Alex	Feb 11	Jayden Mathew	Feb 19
Nowell V Philips	Feb 1	Tiby Raju	Feb 12	Philip Melavila	Feb 20
Saramma Thomas	Feb 1	Alex P Symon	Feb 13	Jenny Raj	Feb 20
Liya S Alex	Feb 1	Isabel Anish	Feb 13	Norah Mary Daniel	Feb 20
Anil T. Babu	Feb 1	Alexander Mathew	Feb 13	Nathania Susan George	Feb 20
Varghese Baby	Feb 2	Paul C John	Feb 13	Robin P. Montharayil	Feb 20
Binu Thankachan	Feb 2	Ditty Mariam Saji	Feb 14	Manju Abraham	Feb 20
Dona Lijin	Feb 3	Ginu C. John	Feb 14	Jacob P Chacko	Feb 21
Edwin Saji	Feb 3	Jibin K Alex	Feb 14	Mariamamma Cherian	Feb 21
Manu Varghese	Feb 3	Justin K Alex	Feb 14	Sophy Mathew	Feb 21
Thankkamma Simon	Feb 4			Leelamma Rajan	Feb 22
Reeja George	Feb 4			Subi Mathew	Feb 22
Simmy Aneena Jacob	Feb 4			Zarah Mary Kurian	Feb 24
Joelyne Jacob	Feb 5			Asher Varghese	Feb 24
Laly Joyes	Feb 5	Jiju Alex	Feb 14	Asher Varghese	Feb 24
Jeena Jacob	Feb 5	Shibu Thomas	Feb 14	Ashok Mathew Koshy	Feb 24
Steffin Manoj	Feb 7	Saramma Varghese	Feb 14	Binny Cherian	Feb 25
Sheena Vaidian	Feb 7	Ezekiel Raju	Feb 15	Chinnamma Philip	Feb 25
Reni Nelson	Feb 7	Raji Aji	Feb 15	Bindu Thomas	Feb 25
Noel Stephen	Feb 8	David Roy	Feb 16	Cherian Varghese	Feb 26
Vinod Jacob	Feb 8	Jimmy James	Feb 16	Joel Philip	Feb 26
Jaime M George	Feb 9	Milly Philip	Feb 17	Sally Thomas	Feb 27
Grace John	Feb 9	George Varughese	Feb 17	Joby George	Feb 27
Cristia Susan Shibu	Feb 10	Jilu Jacob	Feb 17	Jaisy John	Feb 27
Melissa Alice Abraham	Feb 10	Abraham John	Feb 17	Leon Lynnson	Feb 27
Aleyamma Varghese	Feb 10	Omana Abraham	Feb 17	Susan Abraham George	Feb 28
Gibson Thomas George	Feb 10	Alia Ann Bivin	Feb 18		



Sunday School News

Submitted by Binny Cherian, Principal
(Tel.: 914.708.7981, Email: cbinny@gmail.com)

One Year Bible Reading Schedule - February

Date	I	II	III
February 1	Exodus 5-6	Psalms 58-59	Romans 10-11
February 2	Exodus 7-8	Psalms 60-61	Romans 12
February 3	Exodus 9	Psalms 62-63	Romans 13-14
February 4	Exodus 10	Psalms 64-65	Romans 15-16
February 5	Exodus 11-12	Psalms 66-67	Mark 1
February 6	Exodus 13-14	Psalms 68	Mark 2
February 7	Exodus 15	Psalms 69	Mark 3
February 8	Exodus 16	Psalms 70-71	Mark 4
February 9	Exodus 17-18	Psalms 72	Mark 5
February 10	Exodus 19-20	Psalms 73	Mark 6
February 11	Exodus 21	Psalms 74	Mark 7
February 12	Exodus 22	Psalms 75-76	Mark 8
February 13	Exodus 23	Psalms 77	Mark 9
February 14	Exodus 24-25	Psalms 78	Mark 10
February 15	Exodus 26	Psalms 79-80	Mark 11
February 16	Exodus 27	Psalms 81-82	Mark 12
February 17	Exodus 28	Psalms 83-84	Mark 13
February 18	Exodus 29	Psalms 85-86	Mark 14
February 19	Exodus 30	Psalms 87-88	Mark 15-16
February 20	Exodus 31-32	Psalms 89	1 Cor. 1-2
February 21	Exodus 33-34	Psalms 90-91	1 Cor. 3
February 22	Exodus 35	Psalms 92-93	1 Cor. 4-5
February 23	Exodus 36	Psalms 94-95	1 Cor. 6
February 24	Exodus 37	Psalms 96-99	1 Cor. 7
February 25	Exodus 38	Psalms 100-101	1 Cor. 8-9
February 26	Exodus 39-40	Psalms 102	1 Cor. 10
February 27	Leviticus 1-2	Psalms 103	1 Cor. 11
February 28	Leviticus 3-4	Psalms 104	1 Cor. 12-13

Please remember to pray for the Sunday school Children and Staff in your daily prayer.